



Dr. M. G. McLuhan,
President

Disciplined By Grace

by Dr. M.G. McLuhan, President

In a world from performance syndrome, it is often very difficult for Christians to understand the relationship between justification by faith

without works and still demonstrate a life and performance that manifests a spiritual transformation as new creatures in Christ. I have met and counseled with dozens of believers who have expressed great confusion about this issue. Some have told me that their new-found redemption through Christ has made them slaves to rules and religious regulations that they could not live up to. Also, the judgmentalism that they endured from people who had been longer in the faith had become a problem that made them ultra-sensitive about everything they were trying to do to please God.

It is a liberating experience for such Christians when they discover from the scripture in Ephesians 2:8-9, "That by grace we are saved through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God --- not of works, lest any man should boast." Then in Romans 4:5, we read, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Over against these liberating scriptures, we read such passages as Philippians 2:12-13, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Are these powerful scriptures a contradiction about our works and our labors for the Lord? Second Corinthians 5:17 declares, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new [creation]; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." But this scripture brings up the logical question, "By what rules or order am I as

a Christian expected to live, work and behave?" "What motivation do I have to live a renewed or exchanged life?" The basic answer is found in Romans 8:1-4; and since the last part of verse 1 is not in the original Greek text, the passage should read, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus, for the Law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

PRAISE THE LORD!

We were able to end the year in the black.

Thank you to those who felt led to give a year-end contribution. We appreciate so much your faithfulness and support in this ministry!

It is impossible for us who have been saved by grace and born again through the Spirit to live up to God's standards in our own strength. Even though we have become new creatures in Christ, we need to learn to walk in the Holy Spirit, as the above passage and several others declare. As one of the above-quoted scriptures declares, "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure." As true believers in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, we know that by the Holy Spirit's power we should be living a transformed life which becomes more like what Christ our Lord modeled for us by teaching and walking through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

This brings up the final issue of being disciplined by grace instead of some series of "do's and don'ts" that have been set up by religious and

sectarian leaders and which are purely legalistic, becoming the basis of judgment of each other. Every true Christian's spiritual life is a growth in grace and in the knowledge of God and His will. In walking in the Spirit, we may fall short, and John tells us in I John 2:1-2, "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not, and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

It is normal for all of us as believers to discover that some of the things that troubled our consciences were not really unscriptural, and on the other hand, as we grow in grace there may be things that we did without thinking they were wrong, but now no longer feel spiritually free to do them. Other believers who watched us may have had the same experience in judging us. When we are truly being disciplined by grace and the Holy Spirit, we are very sensitive about our fellow Christian who has a conscience problem about something that we feel free to do.

In the fourteenth chapter of Romans and the eighth chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle dealt with this problem in depth. When I first began to understand God's grace, it was one of the most liberating spiritual experiences that I had ever had. God broke many of the chains that had been binding me. I reveled in my newfound liberty from nit-picking legalism and was not charitable toward my brethren who had not been liberated. As I struggled to understand God's will for me, I began to realize that I was indeed my brother's keeper, and as I strove to reach other fellow believers about what God's grace had come to mean to me, I discovered that in my ministry to them I had to work gently and lovingly within the limits of their own consciences in order to lead them into deeper freedom in Christ.

I recall an experience I had while on a missionary journey with a friend in the jungle areas in Africa. We had to take all of our food, water and other essentials with us. I had purchased a rather expensive can of salt-cured bacon and looked forward to frying it over an open fire in the bush.

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Notices will be published in four consecutive issues upon each written request to our office. Please limit notices to name, address, phone and a maximum of 50 words describing your ministry. We recommend that all our ministers make their tapes, reference letters and other pertinent ministry information available to all inquirers.

Please address correspondence to the address indicated in the individual member's ad or by writing them in care of:

NETWORKING
International Ministerial Fellowship
P.O. Box 32366
Minneapolis, MN 55432-0366

All mail will be forwarded directly to appropriate members for their timely response to you. Current IMF members may call our office for addresses and phone numbers in order to make direct contact.

Individuals Available For Ministry

REV. MICHAEL CREMER STILLWATER, MN

"It takes one to know one" is the theme of my ministry. I've been in prison four times and I have lived a sinful life. God has expressed His amazing grace in me that He might offer hope to many who think life is hopeless. I'm available to teach/train individuals for prison ministry. I am affiliated and involved with Prison Fellowship and Network For Life. For more information, please write to: P.O. Box 894, Stillwater, MN 55082 or call (612) 430-1440. (1)

REV. PAUL M. GAMLEN NOOKSACK, WA

Available for full-time worship/music ministry position. Licensed with IMF since 1988. He and his wife, Janell, desire that people enter the presence of the Lord through worship and want to see music/drama productions reaching out to change lives and win the lost. Willing to relocate. For more information and/or resume, call (360) 966-3341, or write to: P.O. Box 4133, Nooksack, WA, 98276. (4)

REV. CHRISTOPH LAMETER LOS ANGELES, CA

I am one year from completing my Ph.D. in Theology from Fuller Seminary in Los Angeles. I am willing to let the Spirit lead me as I am currently able to move into new areas of ministry. I was a speaker at the recent IMF Conference, am a native German, have diverse denominational, cultural and business experience with comprehensive knowledge. For more information, please e-mail to clameter@i-m-f.org or call (626) 454-2472. (1)

REV. JOHN MCDONALD AUSTRALIA

John is an Australian who serves as a missionary to the United States. He is a soloist and has

a prophetic teaching and anointing. John has been given a word for the nation — America, this is your day. God's day of visitation will result in revival or judgment! John is available for single or short-term ministry. For more information, write to the IMF office, c/o John McDonald. (4)

REV. GERRY MESTEK ELMHURST, IL

Gerry is an ordained minister (1995) with IMF and has been a member in good standing since 1993. Prior to joining IMF, he held ministry credentials with the Assembly of God, Illinois District. He has ministers as an evangelist to the motorcyclist community since 1984, under New Covenant Ministries, a tent ministry, which he founded. He is now seeking a position as pastor, assistant pastor or youth pastor in a local congregation. For more information, please write or call: 601 W. Comstock Ave., Elmhurst, IL, 60126, (630) 941-3709. (2)

REV. JACK NANTAIS CHANCELLOR, SD

Jack is an ordained minister with IMF (1996) and teaches a message of God's grace. He is looking for a pulpit where the congregation has the vision of reaching their community with the healing power of the Holy Spirit to the hurt and wounded believer, as well as the unsaved. For more information, please write to: 46122 268th Street, Chancellor, SD 57015 or call (605) 526-4320. (1)

REV. EDWIN PHILLIPS, M.DIV. KAPAA, HI

I am intimately acquainted with ministry to those in pain and suffering as I have spent thousands of hours in Christian counseling, as well as church growth and development. I also have eight years of pastoral experience, as well as five years experience as a hospital and hospice chaplain. I have been married for fifteen years and have three children. For more information, please write to 4917 Ali Ali Road, Kapaa, HI 96746, call (808) 822-3117 or e-mail to arkangl@aloha.net. (1)

REV. BOB SILLING HARRISONBURG, VA

I have been with IMF since 1986 and am available for church services, revivals, evangelistic outreaches outside the church, crusades, prison services and any other place where I can preach the Word. Willing to travel anywhere in the U.S., Canada and overseas. I have been on several foreign mission trips, conducted open air preachings and have sixteen years experience in leading outreaches. For more information, please write to: 290-B Rocco Ave., Harrisonburg, VA 22801, call (540) 433-4849 or e-mail to bob1053@juno.com. (1)

Positions Available

REV. LARSON MUTEMBU AUSTRALIA

Are you planning to visit Africa? If you are, then plan to visit Zambia and minister in our God

First Team affiliate churches and also in other charismatic churches in different towns. For more information, please write to: P.O. Box 169, Warburton, Victoria 3799, Australia, or fax to 61-3-5966-5499. (2)

REV. MICHAEL PILLA MINNEAPOLIS, MN

We are an inner city ministry in the second year of a church plant in South Minneapolis. We are looking/praying for a person to come in and take over the music ministry. This person must be called to the city, be spirit-filled and able to lead contemporary praise and worship on Sunday mornings. This is a paid/part-time position. If interested, please call (612) 821-9434. (1)

REV. BEN TIPPETT E. PALATKA, FL

Victory Christian Fellowship is looking for a young couple or single person to help develop a Youth Ministry who is also experienced in music (keyboard). This is a new church and would require outside employment. The church is growing and has plans to build a 200-seat multi-purpose building. For more information, please write or call, P.O. Box 741, East Palatka, FL 32131, (904) 325-3699. (2)

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Registration office: International Ministerial Fellowship, P.O. Box 32366, Fridley, MN 55432, Phone (612) 571-5967, Fax (612) 571-6835. Our new web site is: www.i-m-f.org and our e-mail addresses are:

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For address changes and name removals, see instructions on the mailing panel. The contents of this publication and other Fellowship bulletins, publications or announcements are subject to change without notice. If you are interested in submitting an article to be published in the Pastoral Letter, please mail or fax a copy of your article (no more than 500 words) to IMF. Every article submitted is subject to a full review by the IMF Editorial Committee.

Department of Foreign Missions

Winston Mattsson-Boze, Coordinator of IMF Foreign Missions Department



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Coordinator of IMF Foreign Missions

I went to see my friend, Ake Boberg, in Stockholm in October. He is retired now and finds walking difficult. He served God for many years in Africa and speaks Swedish, English, French and Swahili. He served as a mission secretary for the Philadelphia Church for many years as well. When he was preaching—before he taught me for the first time in 1958—his arm was blown off in an explosion in Zaire. Ake is a seasoned veteran.

I remember a time in the '70's when we were talking about certain dreams I had. We analyzed, and everything seemed so right. Then he said, "And let's not forget to pray." It hit me between the eyes, because I realized I had been praying my will and not God's will.

So when I visited him, I asked, "What is the most important thing we can do on the mission field?" There was no hesitancy. "Teaching," he said. Then he added, "Of course, you must recognize that I have been in teaching all my life, and have a certain bias."

Each one functions in his or her ministry. But for the work to go on generation after generation, the teaching must be established. It must come, "line upon line, precept upon precept." We teach the principles of the coming Kingdom.

Naturally we desire to see all the gifts and ministries function in the church. The one who teaches is to "wait on" his teaching, it says in the New Testament in Romans 12. The whole lifestyle is

that of a waiter serving the ministry God has placed in their life. He or she must do that because the teachers have the potential for "greater condemnation." What they teach continues to carry weight to many others.

In missions, the great challenge is to produce a renewed mind. Cultural habits affect all of us in our thinking. Missionaries themselves confuse the Gospel with Americanism. National Christians feel they must reject their own culture and be like the missionaries. There is a certain arrogance that says that American's wealth is the result of God's favoring capitalism.

Teaching—patient, clear, concise teaching—will show the difference between the missionary's culture and the Bible's culture. It will also—eventually—draw the difference between the target culture and the Bible culture.

It's amazing to see the change that occurs in a group of untrained village pastors when they are exposed to a couple of hours of teaching events.

An elder in a church in Honduras used to irritate me because when he led the service, he was terribly loud, and could sing a song 10 times. When he preached,

he raked people over the coals. But he was faithful, and he went through a Bible School we developed.

His ways got to me, and once when I left the country, I sent instructions about his messages that for the next three months he should concentrate on the theme of mercy. They told me he preached the most severe mercy they ever heard!

But he kept on with his studies, and he began to see. His preaching changed. His home life changed. His way of leading changed. He is still dynamic, but he isn't loud any more. His tongue is disciplined by teaching. Now he is teaching others.

I agree with my friend Ake. The single most important thing we can do is teach. It is especially important in the villages, where there are no Bible schools and learning opportunities. Missionaries must develop ways to get learning out to those who need it most.

Winston serves as the IMF Missions Coordinator, but also leads the Herald of Faith Mission. His own mission is separate from IMF to avoid conflicts. His principal purpose is to train village pastors, and to this end he has helped establish a number of church-based Bible Schools in Argentina.

His in put in Honduras has led to a number of projects; A Bible School with sixty students, four Sewing Schools, an Agricultural Teaching Project, a Clinic, and a Community Development Project.

He teaches occasionally for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and is frequently away teaching and preaching.

He will be in Kenya and Uganda in February, where his father began the Herald of Faith teaching ministry forty years ago.

He recently earned a Ph.D. in International Christian Relations from Vision Christian University.

The International Ministerial Fellowship (IMF) Missions Department exists to help IMF ministers fulfill the Great Commission. We serve both as a sending agency and a support agency for overseas missionaries and ministries.

IMF Missions is distinct in that it serves independent ministers, while respecting the autonomy and freedom of IMF members. At the same time, we provide the accountability and support service that overseas workers' need. IMF Missions is committed to presenting the ministries of its overseas members to churches in the United States. We are also dedicated to helping our missionaries strengthen their spiritual and material foundations. We want to broaden our horizons so we can introduce many diverse people groups throughout the world to salvation in Christ.

If you have questions about our Missions Department or our missionaries, please call Marlyce Miller, IMF Operations Manager for Foreign Missions, at the IMF Office 612-571-5967.

Member Spotlight: Tom Papania — From Mafia to Ministry

Written by Noël Piper, friend of IMF

The FBI says Tom Papania's Sicilian grandfather brought the Mafia to the USA. Tom's father, however, wouldn't touch it. So at 15, Tom used Mafia connections to get even with his hard-working, hard father, who never showed love. In and out of prison, disowned by his parents, Tom climbed the ladder to work directly for Boss Paul Castellano, "earning" over \$10 million annually.

In 1984 in Atlanta, he took mental inventory of his wealth. He gloated, comparing himself with his father, working and scraping and still having nothing. God spoke to his heart, "Your life and lifestyle are wrong. This is not what I have chosen for you. I can change it if you give yourself to Me."

Shortly thereafter, at the invitation of an Atlanta acquaintance, he visited Landmark Church - but defiantly. Pastor Fred Kelly, a stranger, looked into Tom's eyes, "The eyes are the window of the soul. I see a boy desperately seeking his father's love. God loves you." Tom wept and prayed to become God's son.

What about the Mafia? Tom's Bible said that when the Son sets you free, you are free indeed; men could not pose real danger. His boss put out a contract on his life. Over time, three bombs were placed beneath his bedroom window - all failed to detonate. He knew he could die. He also knew that Christ had died for him and that his Father loved him. When the boss himself died, the contract expired.

Ironically, after conversion, he spent 11½ months in the penitentiary, tried for a crime he hadn't committed. After being found innocent, he sought work and sensed God's push toward ministry - in prisons, where he had already spent about 10 years. The former Ten Million Dollar Man now lived below poverty level, mowing lawns, delivering papers and loading moving vans to live. "God broke me and brought me to say, 'No matter what I have, I appreciate it.'"



IMF member, Rev. Tom Papania and his wife, Teresa at their home in Powder Springs, Georgia.

Tom was ordained by IMF in 1989, and in the early 90's by Landmark Church. God's Saving Grace Ministries, working with prisoners in the Atlanta area, also takes the gospel and practical help to their families - work done by Tom and his wife (of 2½ years), Teresa, and six steady volunteers. All donations go directly to ministry. The Papanias earn their income from sales of the recordings of his testimony.

Tom speaks widely - at prayer breakfasts,

FCA, CBMC and Full Gospel Business Men's groups, universities, and at evangelistic events sponsored by churches. His prerequisite is that there be lots of non-Christians. Since his first international mission in 1991, Tom reports more than 100,000 conversions in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. A recent Focus on the Family airing has overwhelmed the ministry with requests for tapes and speaking engagements. More than 10,000* asked for salvation packets.

How does Tom avoid self-sufficiency and pride? "I look at my past life of glitter and fame - that's not it. It's easy not to get a swelled head. I know it's God, not me. He's only using me - as long as I'm humble. If I swell up, I pray he'll stop me. Every time I tell my testimony, it reminds me how far I've come, and it's only from God."

What's next? Tom has a vision for an Aftercare Center, where a prisoner can earn his GED, learn job skills, study the Bible and enter society as a productive Christian.

Tom was reconciled with his parents before their deaths. His mother had prayed for years that he would become a priest, her way of asking God to get hold of him. He did.

*10,000 is the corrected total from the number that was printed in the recent year-end letter.

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As I opened it, I saw a deeply concerned look come over my companion's face. He remarked, "You are not going to eat that pork are you?" He continued to tell me that neither he nor his parents had ever eaten pork because the Old Testament scriptures condemned it. At first, I was inwardly irritated by his viewpoint, but just before I spoke to try to defend my freedom, I remembered that in I Corinthians 8:13, the apostle Paul said, "Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." I suddenly realized that my dear Christian brother's conscience marked the eating of that bacon as an uncharitable act on my part. Consequently, the hyenas found an opened can of bacon at our abandoned campsite.

During the rest of our journey, I spoke gently to him about the legalism that had bound him that morning. I reminded him that God had good reason to condemn the camp scavenging swine that plagued Israel in the desert. Pork in our time came from hogs that had been carefully fed and in I Timothy 4:3-5, the same apostle Paul had warned his youth pastor friend that some teachers would forbid people from marrying and

eating certain foods which God had created to be received with thanksgiving. He concluded his instructions by saying, "For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." I rejoiced inwardly when a couple of days later my friend said, "You know, I was wrong when I encouraged you to throw away that good bacon."

To all of my beloved friends in IMF, let me conclude by urging each of you to realize that we have been called to liberty (Gal. 5:13) and we must not use that liberty to walk roughshod over our weaker brother's conscience. Those who are disciplined by grace are gracious, patient and non-judgmental.

Dr. M. G. McLuhan is President of IMF. He has served as a pastor/evangelist for several years, as a missionary in South Africa for 11 years and as an Associate Pastor of Mt. Paran Church in Atlanta, GA (11,000 members) for 16 years. Dr. McLuhan has over 50 years of ministry experience as a pastor, evangelist, lecturer, missionary and President of the International Bible College in Minot, ND, and as President of Berea Theological College in Pretoria, South Africa.

LEAVE A LEGACY OF LOVE

Your Will can be a love letter wherein you express your affections for those nearest your heart. For Christians, a Will can reflect an added dimension, as they declare their love for the Lord. It is even possible to remember the Lord's Work through an existing Will by simply adding a supplement to it.

I am interested in having my Will express my love for the Lord. Please send me information on how I can remember International Ministerial Fellowship as I prepare my final gift to God.

Please complete the following and mail to IMF, P.O. Box 32366, Fridley, MN 55432.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Country _____
Zip _____
Birthday: _____

Please check the following:

Male

Ministry for Seniors: What Does A Chaplain Do?

(Matthew 25:3)

"I was in prison, and ye came to me."

by Michael Cremer, IMF Member

by IMF Member, Rev. Bill Earman

TEACHING IN A NURSING HOME. In many ways, communicating with residents in a nursing home (or with a senior at home) is like communicating with a child. On the other hand, many nursing home residents have complete mental abilities and can grasp the most difficult theological apologetics. There is, however, a simple process to remember that can touch both ends of the spectrum: TELL A STORY!

As examples, two simple objects can be used to illustrate important points:

THE CROSS CAN BE USED TO TEACH PRAYING. You begin at the top of the cross and if you visualize Jesus on the cross, this is where his head would be. You look into his eyes and say, "I love you Jesus and I accept you as my Savior." Next, you move your attention to one of the horizontal members of the cross (His hands) and you ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins. Next you move to the other side of the horizontal member and you thank Jesus (God) for the many wonderful things in your life. In these two horizontal member prayers, remember that the hands of Jesus are nailed here. When discussing sin, think that you helped drive the nails. Remember that His hands are palm out and if the nails were not there, He could hug you tightly, etc.

Now you have said, "I love you," "Forgive me of my sins," "Thank you for my many blessings." Now look at the center of the cross where the vertical and horizontal members cross where the heart of Jesus would be located. Pray for someone else and remember "love thy neighbor." Pray for those less fortunate than ourselves, pray that the sick and poor and those in prison might be able to endure those things in their lives which they cannot change. Pray from your heart, just like the heart of Jesus. Finally, and last, always last, we look at the feet of Jesus on the cross, nailed firmly into the foundation of our faith, and it is here that we pray for ourselves, always last. Looking at the cross we can see a real order to prayer — We love you Jesus, forgive us, thank you, pray for others and finally for our own problems and concerns. Using the cross, you can develop a great prayer technique that can be taught to everyone. Pass out simple crosses at the end.

A SIMPLE CANDY CANE CAN BE USED TO ILLUSTRATE LOVE. A candymaker in Ohio invented the candy cane and originally it was just white because it represented the virgin birth and was pure and holy. It was shaped like a "J" for "Jesus," not a crook or a cane (make your own play on words at this point — not for support but in remembrance). The candymaker looked at the "J" and decided it was very plain, so he spun some red into the candy. Three red stripes to represent the stripes on the back of Jesus and one wide red stripe to represent the cleansing blood of Jesus. Now you have a religious symbol instead of a "candy cane." It was the love of a simple candymaker that made this famous symbol.

Bible study time should be fun and interesting, not just a lecture. It is a time to teach how to pray and how to live

Rev. Bill Earman serves as a chaplain in nursing homes, hospitals and in-home for the elderly. As a chaplain, his pastoral duties include legal management, health management and non-denominational ministry (Christ-centered). Bill is a tireless worker for those less fortunate people that society sometimes forgets. He seems to live by a quote from Albert Einstein, "From the point of view of daily life and without going deeper, we exist for our fellow men, particularly for those on whose smiles and well-being all our happiness depends." If you have questions, please write to or call 4550 8th Street, Vero Beach, FL 32968 (561-562-3684).

"Lock them up! They are only getting what they deserve." This statement is rational, but is it right from God's perspective? "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." "When you have done it to the least of these brethren, ye have done it to me," Matthew 25:40b.

You've got to be kidding! If we minister to those in prison, God's Word says we are ministering to Him? That is a divine, Biblical fact! So what is the problem? Why are so many people not doing prison ministry?

Fear of the unknown; fear of the image that all criminals are horrible animals only waiting for an opportunity to hurt someone. God has not given us the spirit of fear. God tells us to visit those in prison and when we do, we are visiting the Master Himself!

Let us face our fear with the power of God! Prison ministry is a much neglected area. There are so many inmates who are forgotten. The needs are endless and the hunger of God within prison walls is outstanding! Who will dare to put God's Word into practice? Who will stand in the gap for the thousands of men and women who seemingly have been forgotten? Jesus exhorts us to do something about these forgotten people.

My name is Michael Cremer. I am a licensed minister with International Ministerial Fellowship and am in the process of becoming ordained. I'm a chaplain in a local city jail. Currently there are over 1.6 million prisoners in the U.S. If the present rate of incarceration continues, by the year 2037, half of America will be in prison and the other half will be taking care of them. It costs between 20 and 30 thousand dollars per year to house an inmate. We have the answer and it certainly is not more prisons! Jesus Christ, being born again — regeneration versus rehabilitation. New life through Jesus Christ will deal with our national "crime" problem.

I know what I'm talking about because I'm living proof that the Gospel works! I've been in prison four times and I've lived a very wicked life. By the grace and power of God, I have been changed from the inside out! I went from living, cheating and stealing to loving, giving and healing. I'm now a fruitful member of society committed to sharing the powerful Gospel with others. God is doing a tremendous work in the penal system across America. I have several friends who are ex-convicts who are living for Jesus!

How can you get involved? Start a prison ministry in your church. I would be glad to come and share some basic information with whoever senses God's call. There is an organization called Prison Fellowship that provides many different ways of getting involved in prison ministry. A new branch of P.F. is called Network for Life (NFL). The NFL emphasis is helping ex-offenders make it in the "real world." The easy part is getting offenders saved in prison and the challenge is helping them make it in the free world.

There are many obstacles for newly released prisoners. The body of Christ can reach out and help bridge the gap between prison and freedom. The NFL is a good resource for anyone interested in effective prison ministry. I represent PF/NFL and I would love to have the opportunity to share the vision God has given me. I'm committed to doing the work of prison ministry as well as training those who desire to get involved. Jesus is crying out, "Please come and visit me!"

"The Lord Sets Prisoners Free" (Ps. 146:7)

*In the big house with many rooms today,
There's awful memories that hold dismay.
There's pain and suffering within the past,
And scars and hurts that haunt and last.*

*The anger boils over from deep inside,
And bitterness swells like a rising tide.
They effect he way of response and reaction
And it's hard to change the resulting action.*

*But when there's willing, despite the past
To come to Jesus without the mask
The scars and stains of destructive history,
Can be more than matched by healing victory.*

*They say a leopard cannot change its spots
But Jesus can change what we can not.
There's hope for those who've known abuse,
And for those who've said, there is no use.*

*Strong chains that bind, can broken be!
Alleluia, the Lord sets prisoners free!
He came to save us from the burden of sin,
And to heal the wounds we feel within.*



Intercessory Prayer Group

by Dr. Ron Keller

*Dr. Ron Keller
Coordinator of Prayer
Ministries*

Dear Praying Friends:

We just completed that busy, almost out of control time of year where our organizational activities have or are still being launched and we feel like we have been launched with them.

It's so easy to get caught up in the "Christian enterprise" and all of its demands - at the expense of doing the most important parts of our ministry.

As IMF members, we are privileged to serve as independent pastors who can avoid the usual denominational snags. Our calling is very unique. Jesus, I believe, wants us to be free from any encumbrances that would prevent us from clearly focusing on Him and His call for our lives right at this moment.

My hunch is that this is what the first disciples experienced. They were called. They dropped their nets and left their boats. Only in times of doubt did they look back to their old professions and the "organizational security" those professions provided.

Only in prayer and continuous meditation on God's Word can we find the strength, courage, faith and nourishment for our souls to stay on the narrow road that we have been called to. Prayer must be our top priority, not organizational matters, meetings or all of the other urgent things that may encroach on our time.

The Christmas and New Year season can be the worst. It can demand the most of us. Jesus wants us to rest in Him. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). If our yoke is not easy, we may be overextended. If our burden is not light, it may be a signal that it is time to go back to the One, the only One, who can give us rest.

With you, I pray that we can all have a great year of prayer so we can enjoy the gracious and loving presence of Jesus Christ. I pray that we will take up His yoke, not ours. That our activities will be dominated by His will, not by the pressures that come from our organizations.

Praying with you,

Dr. Ron Keller
Coordinator of Prayer Ministries

Ron Keller, Ph.D., is the Coordinator of Prayer Ministries and is an ordained member of IMF. He is the author of ten published books and is a counselor, workshop leader and speaker.



Dr. Susan Shaw

Women as Ministers

by IMF Member, Susan J. Shaw, M.Div., Ph.D.
Pastors' Outreaching Wives Enrichment Resource

When we think of the harvest season, we cannot help but think of the story of Ruth as presented to us in the Old Testament.

Evidently, when the gentile Ruth committed herself to her Jewish husband in the land of Moab, she not only vowed to remain faithful to him but to his family as well. As we know from the text, Ruth's sister-in-law, Orpah, was persuaded to return to her home when she became widowed (Chapter 1, verse 14), but the widowed Ruth was adamant about remaining with her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi/Mara, despite the formidable challenges she would face in the new and hostile country of Israel (verses 16-18).

The barley harvest had just begun when Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem and it was Ruth, not Naomi, who suggested that she go to glean from that harvest, as was the custom according to the Levitical code of the Jews (Leviticus 19:9-10). Clearly, Ruth had paid attention to the Jewish knowledge she had gained and demonstrated her virtue and determination by seizing the opportunity to provide sustenance for herself and her mother-in-law.

By presenting herself in the open fields among total strangers, Ruth proved the value of a good reputation (Chapter 2, verse 11). Boaz treated Ruth with unusual respect and courtesy, based upon what he had heard about her actions and her attitude. Her witness as a faithful and dutiful woman had preceded her and even the stranger, Boaz, was willing to offer her blessing (verse 12) and sustenance (verse 14).

As the Scripture informs us, Boaz was not merely someone able to provide immediate material comfort to Ruth and Naomi, but one who was able to serve as a kinsman-redeemer to Elimelech's family line (verse 20). It is not possible here to give a full explication of this Hebraic trial custom, but Boaz certainly represents one who was to come forth to save Naomi and Ruth from degradation, starvation and annihilation. In this way and manner, he prefigured the Christ who would come to save all of the lost and perishing so many years later (John 3:16).

A complete reading of the four-chapter book of Ruth reveals the way in which Ruth served her mother-in-law, approached Boaz, participated in the harvest, and at last remarried into a Jewish family. Her life as a woman of compassion, humility, perseverance, and faith, provides an example unmatched even within the Bible itself, especially in light of the fact that she herself was not born Jewish. The Book of Timothy in the New Testament makes very clear that such behavior and devotion is to be expected from those within the household of faith (Chapter 5, verse 8).

In fact, Ruth's incredible devotion to her mother-in-law, her second husband, and the God of her people, enabled her to become part of the blood line leading to Jesus Christ, himself. In Chapter 4:18-22, we read a genealogy which leads directly to the birth of David and in the Book of Matthew, Chapter 1, the genealogy continues directly to the Savior. Perhaps if Ruth deserved a reward for her incredible selflessness, none could be better than to be chosen to participate in the generations of the Savior of the world!

Dr. Susan J. Shaw has over thirty years' experience as a professional educator, academician, administrator and businesswoman. A Messianic Jew, baptized as a Presbyterian, Susan came to a personal knowledge of the Savior twenty years ago and has dedicated herself to theological study ever since. As a professionally trained music educator, she holds a M.Div. from Alliance Theological Seminary (CMA) and an M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Theological and Religious Studies from Drew University (United Methodist).

A professional both in and out of the classroom, in both the public and private sectors, Susan has had experience as a student, a teacher, a parent of students and an academic administrator. It has been her prayer and goal, for most of her years as a Completed Jew, that she have the opportunity to develop professional academic programs in theology and religious studies for women (and interested men).

Give & Take

An exchange program to help redistribute new and used equipment and materials for church and ministry utilization

Rev. Jan Bracht, 493 Lassie Circle, Hudson, WI 54016
(715) 386-8790

Items Needed:

— used, soft-covered Bibles to distribute to prisoners

by Elizabeth Ann Tinics, E.A.

IT IS W-2 TIME AGAIN

I have recently put together a flyer, "How to Prepare 1997 W-2's for Ministers and Other Employees." It also covers the W-27 transmittal and the church's responsibility for filing these forms. Because it is five pages, I am not including it in this article, but will be glad to mail or fax it to anyone upon request.

W-2's must be prepared for employees before February 1st and sent to the Social Security Administration before March 1, 1998.

SPOUSAL IRA'S

An IRA is an attractive way to shelter income from tax while at the same time deferring tax on earnings. Taxpayers can contribute up to the lesser of \$2,000 or 100% of compensation each year into an IRA.

In the past, persons who have chosen not to work outside the home have been ineligible to participate fully in an IRA since they have no "compensation" from which to make contributions. This rule ignored the value of services rendered.

However, for 1997, persons who receive no compensation may now contribute up to \$2,000 annually to an IRA, if the compensation of their spouse is at least as much as the combined amount of their IRA contributions. Remember, you have until April 15, 1998, to make a 1997 contribution to your IRA. If your IRA qualifies as a deduction, this is the one thing you can still do to lower 1997 taxes.

WILL YOU RECEIVE A 1997 TAX PACKAGE FROM THE IRS?

The IRS expects to receive roughly 123 million returns this year. However, they are only sending tax return packages to about 60 million taxpayers and postcards to another 6.9 million. Only about 34 million taxpayers will get packages containing the traditional forms. About 26 million others will receive instructions on how to file by phone, without a form. The 6.9 million postcards will go to taxpayers who previously used a computer to prepare or file their returns. The postcard will carry a preprinted label that such filers can affix to their return or signature form to help the IRS process it accurately. The tax packages will cost the IRS \$10.3 million to print and \$10.6 million in postage.

The tax practitioner community has been told that our clients will not receive labels, since very few of us use them. Many tax practitioners file electronically, eliminating the need for labels. So if you receive a label, send it along with your tax material, but don't worry if you don't get one.

(I don't understand why the IRS spends so much money sending out labels to only a portion of the taxpayers. If they don't really care if we use them, why waste the money? On the other hand, if they spend it on mailing, they don't have it to spend on audits, which could be a plus).

STUDENTS' CAPITAL GAIN TAX COULD BE LOWER THAN PARENTS

Parents may want to shift more capital gains to their teenagers, especially if the children are heading for college in the next few years. Teens now pay lower taxes on capital gains than do many parents and will continue to do so unless a

future Congress revises the tax rules. Teens' top capital gain rate is 10%, rather than the 20% many parents pay. That's 10% on assets sold after being held for longer than 18 months. For assets held 12 to 18 months, it's 15% for teens and 28% for many parents.

To qualify for the 10-15% bracket, taxable income must stay below \$24,350 for the single taxpayer and \$41,200 for married filing jointly. Above those amounts, gains are taxed at 20% and 28%. Because their other income usually is quite low, switching assets to teens over several years and spreading the gains over a similar period as needed, could trim the family tax bill enough to cover a college semester.

But the teens must be age 14 or older in the year the assets are sold. If they are sold before age 14, gains are taxed at their parent's rates. Assets can be shifted before age 14, just not sold until after the child turns 14.

The kids' holding period is the same as the donor's. They are treated as having held the assets from when the donor acquired them.

By the way, the top rate on gains for teens is supposed to drop to 8% in 2001 to replace the current 10% rate. But that could be changed.

There are some non-tax risks you need to weigh:

- The assets belong to the teenager. By law, he or she owns them, even if switched over to them via a gift-to-minors account you control. Usually that's not a problem. But every so often, rebellious teens balk at going to college and insist on getting the money and doing their thing, turning sound investment and good tax planning into a family nightmare.
- Financial aid could be lost if too much is in the child's name.
- Gift taxes come into play too, when shifting assets to a child. Up to \$10,000 can be given to a child each year free of federal gift tax. \$20,000 if donor's spouse agrees, even if the assets aren't jointly owned.

MORE ON ROTH IRA'S

A model form for setting up Roth IRA's will be available for 1998 (IRS Form 5305-R, Roth Individual Retirement Trust Account). It can be used by banks, S&L's, stockbrokers, mutual funds and others to establish Roths. Several IRS requirements must be followed:

- Roths must be held separately from regular IRA accounts.
- IRAs converted to Roths must remain segregated, separate from Roths receiving annual contributions. That is because pending legislation would apply an early withdrawal penalty to funds from IRAs that are converted to Roths. This restriction will be enacted in 1998.
- 1997 gross income must be under \$100,000 to convert.
- Roth IRAs will have to be cleaned out after owners die, even though NO payouts are required during owner's life and there is no age 70 1/2 rule. The payout period depends on who is the beneficiary of the Roth. In any case, post-death distributions from a Roth will remain tax-free.

If the spouse is named as sole beneficiary, no

payout is required until after the spouse's death. Then, spouse's heirs must begin withdrawals. Others have two options:

1. To withdraw everything by Dec. 31 of the fifth year after the year the owner of the Roth died; or
2. Receive payouts based on life expectancy, provided they begin withdrawals no later than December 31 of the year after the Roth owner died.

ESTIMATED TAX PENALTIES

For the past few years (including 1997) taxpayers have been penalized for not making estimated payments if their tax exceeded \$500. For 1998, the amount has been increased to \$1,000. So estimated payments will not be required if we expect your 1998 tax to be under \$1,000.

Many people would rather pay quarterlies than have it all due on April 15th. And, of course, the IRS will be glad to accept the payments. But there will be no penalties if you wish to wait until April 15, 1999 to pay 1998 tax liabilities (under \$1,000).

STANDARD DEDUCTION OF DEPENDENTS INCREASED FOR 1998

For 1997, a minor child who works outside the home, and who is claimed as a dependent on his/her parent's tax return can only claim as a standard deduction the greater of \$650 OR the amount of earned income (not to exceed \$4,150, the standard deduction for filing single).

This means that a child who earns, for example, \$2,000 from a job and has savings earnings, has to pay taxes on the savings earnings. But, if he/she did not work, the savings earnings up to \$650 would not be taxable. (Not much incentive to work and save).

In 1998, the deduction will be the greater of \$700 or the amount of earned income plus \$250 (not to exceed \$4,250). The \$4,250 is the 1998 standard deduction for filing single and the \$700 is indexed for inflation from the 1997 amount of \$650. But the good news is that the child can now work and also have savings earnings (up to \$250) and not be penalized for having both.

NEW RECIPIENTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY RECEIVE BENEFITS ON DIFFERENT DAYS

People who apply for benefits beginning May 1, 1998, do not receive their benefits on the third of the month as in the past. Instead, they will receive payments on a second, third or fourth Wednesday of the month. The day you receive your benefits is now determined by the birthdate of the person on whose work record the benefits are based. This means that spouses who apply can expect to receive their benefits based on the birthdate of the working spouse.

Here's how it works — for workers born between the 1st and the 10th of the month, benefits are paid on the second Wednesday; for birthdates between the 11th and 20th, benefits are paid on the third Wednesday; and for birthdates between the 21st and 31st, benefits are paid on the fourth Wednesday.

Current Social Security beneficiaries will continue to be paid on the third of each month. Benefits to current and future Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries will continue to be paid on the first of the month.

Liz Tinics is an Enrolled Agent authorized to represent clients before the IRS. She is available on a fee basis (with discounts to IMF members) for accounting services. Liz will answer short, direct questions for IMF members without charge. However, extended discussion on tax matters will have to be negotiated on a "discount" fee basis (1-800-748-6415).

To correct your name or address on our lists, please send this entire address panel and mailing label from your Pastoral Letter to:

I.M.F.
P.O. Box 32366,
Minneapolis, MN 55432

Please allow six weeks for records to be corrected.



*Richard Amundson
Founder & President,
TENTMAKERS*

Youth Ministries

by Richard Amundson, Founder and President
TENTMAKERS Youth Ministry

There is a growing argument in our office. It's a small battle, only a battle of words, but it represents a deeper, pertinent issue which your church probably faces as you minister to young people.

Should we refer to the professional who ministers to young people a youth leader, youth minister, youth pastor or youth director? Or perhaps a director of youth and family ministry? Or a youth worker? Behind this question lies another: What should the person's primary focus be? Is it to minister directly to young people, or is it to train and disciple volunteers to minister to young people? The expectations of the position are distinctly related to the title.

Tiger McLuen of Youth Leadership, as well as our training instructors here at TENTMAKERS, believe that the position requires a balance between the two foci. A youth minister (and I'll use this title for this article, at least) is usually called to directly serve and relate to young people, to be a discipler, and to be a role model. And yet, just as importantly, a youth minister needs to be a recruiter, trainer, motivator and discipler of adults and parents who also work directly with young people.

For example, Brenda worked as the youth minister in a church for many years. One

day Brenda discovered that Tom, an adult member of her church, had a strong desire to help with the youth ministry. However, there was a big problem. Tom had no idea how to relate with young people and was extremely awkward around them. Brenda proceeded to train Tom in some relationship skills that she had learned through TENTMAKERS Training. Slowly, Tom gained confidence, took more responsibility with the youth program, and was a blessing to many young people. After Brenda left her position, it was Tom who became the leader and kept the youth ministry going strong.

Brenda could have easily shrugged off Tom, thinking, "He has no gifts with young people whatsoever!" or even, "It's not my job to train Tom — I don't have the time — I have too many kids to take care of." Praise the Lord that she didn't think these things but took the time to build up his skill and confidence to be a true minister to young people.

I think we can safely say that the old model of a "pied piper" youth minister is dead. The image of a 20-year-old with a guitar and a few juggling tricks just doesn't cut it. Churches are desperately seeking youth ministers who can relate to both adults and youth, who take the time and energy to invest in the lives of potential leaders, and who share in the vision of the whole church.

If you have a youth "minister" on your staff, what are the congregation's expectations of this person? Do they conflict at all? What title do you use for this person? We would love to hear your thoughts or questions on this issue. You can e-mail us at TentYM@aol.com or write to us at TENTMAKERS, 500 Blake Road South, Hopkins, MN 55343. Also, if you would like information on how to equip your youth minister with the skills to build and train other leaders for ministry, let us know.

Well, our staff may never reach an agreement about a title for the youth ministry professional. But one thing we do agree on is that we need to keep developing and training people who will reach more young people with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

TENTMAKERS is uniquely positioned today to be instrumental in "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry." Who are the true tentmakers in our congregations? They are not just our youth ministers. Tentmakers are men and women from all walks of life who feel a calling to serve God more effectively with the gifts they've been given. Since 1979, TENTMAKERS has trained thousands of staff and lay people in leadership and ministry skills. To find out more about our course offerings, please give us a call at (800) 989-TENT. TENTMAKERS is an associated ministry with IMF. We fully endorse and recommend their youth ministry training program and their pastoral leadership and management training services.

Richard Amundson founded TENTMAKERS Youth Ministry in 1978 and continues to serve as President. In 1987, he founded Wilderness North, a leadership training camp in the Superior National Forest in northern Minnesota. Richard is a 1974 graduate of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and currently resides in Eden Prairie, MN, with his wife, Londa, and four children. For more information on TENTMAKERS training, please call the IMF office at (612) 571-5967.